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THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

1921-1922

NOTE

DURING the winter of 1921-22—its sixteenth consecutive season—the Museum's Egyptian Expedition conducted broad programs of investigation, with notable results, upon its concessions at the Pyramids of Lisht and in the Theban Necropolis. Its parallel pieces of excavation on these two sites began in early December and extended into the following May, with an average force of three hundred and fifty workmen on each site.

The very considerable cost of conducting the excavations on such a scale was met in part by a liberal appropriation made by the Trustees, supplemented by a generous gift made by Edward S. Harkness, whose annual contributions to the work for many years have enabled the Expedition to extend its investigations to a point that could not otherwise have been possible.

The excavations at Lisht, which were conducted by A. C. Mace, centered on the continuation of the clearing of the northern pyramid and the tombs adjacent to it. The important results derived from these excavations are described by Mr. Mace in his accompanying report.

At Thebes, the excavations carried out by H. E. Winlock continued his work of the two previous years on the mortuary-temples and tombs of the XI dynasty. The striking results yielded by these excavations, described in his report which follows, form a contribution of the highest importance to our knowledge of this particular period.

The graphic section of the Expedition, under N. de Garis Davies and his assistants, has continued during the past season the copying of the painted scenes on the walls of private and royal tombs at Thebes, as described in his report. The publication

of some of the most representative of these tombs by Mr. Davies, in the folio volumes of the Robb de Peyster Tytus memorial series, has made material progress during the year. Volumes II and III of this series, describing and illustrating the tomb of Puyemrê, are just issuing from the press, while Volume IV, dealing with the so-called Tombeau des Graveurs, has entered the press during the year. Likewise Volume V, devoted to the tombs of Userhêt and Apy, is now in part in the press.

For several years the Expedition has been engaged in making a photographic record of existing Theban monuments. This work, which is being carried out by Henry Burton, had already provided the Museum with some fifteen hundred negatives which must prove an invaluable record for the future. During the past season, in addition to several private tombs at Sheikh Abd el Kurna, Mr. Burton succeeded in carrying out the difficult task of securing negatives of the sculptured and painted walls of the Sepulchral Hall of the Tomb of Seti I, in the Valley of the Kings, and also of some of the scenes in the Tomb of Nofretari, in the Valley of the Queens. He plans to continue his photographic record of these two tombs during the coming season.

Gratifying progress can be reported also with respect to the publication of certain sides of the Expedition's work. Two volumes dealing with the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, excavated by the Expedition in 1911-14, are now in the press. Volume I, by H. E. Winlock and W. E. Crum, deals with the excavation of the monastery and the facts brought to light as to monastic life at Thebes during the seventh century A. D. Volume II, by W. E. Crum and H. G. Evelyn White, is devoted to the consideration of the Coptic

and Greek texts from the monastery. The cost of publication of these volumes is being met through an appropriation made by the Trustees, supplemented by a contribution from Mr. Harkness.

Again Mr. Harkness, by a most generous offer, has recently made possible the immediate publication of three volumes relating to the Monasteries of the Wady Natrûn. An elaborate study into the history of these structures has been carried out over several years past by certain members of the Expedition assigned to the task. This study has also included a record, through photographs and drawings, of

their architectural and decorative features.

The publication of this work, which Mr. Harkness' munificent gift has now rendered possible, will be comprised in two volumes—the text by H. G. Evelyn White, the photographic plates by Henry Burton, with architectural drawings by W. J. Palmer-Jones and Walter Hauser. A third volume, by Evelyn White, deals with newly found manuscripts discovered by him in the years 1920 and 1921 in a storeroom of one of these monasteries, that of Saint Macarius, as announced in the report of the Expedition last year. A. M. LYTHGOE.

EXCAVATIONS AT LISHT

THERE are certain aspects of a digger's life which may be well described—like the cynic's definition of second marriages—as the triumph of hope over experience. He has learnt, or should have learnt, by repeated experience in the past that he is not in the least likely to find things in places where he expects to find them, and that in nine cases out of ten it will be the chance strike in the unexpected place that will repay his labor, and yet—confront him with the bricked-up doorway of an untouched burial, and despite himself he will begin to plan exhibition space in the museum for the treasure that ought to lie behind it. He dare not, moreover, leave anything to chance. There are exceptional cases—witness the Dashur princesses and their jewelry—and this may be one of them; so he spends valuable time photographing the door-blocking and taking it down with his own hands, to find the treasure resolve itself into a couple of pottery jars and a cheap string of beads. Unplundered burials may be interesting enough from an archaeological point of view, but for museum purposes they rarely, or comparatively rarely, contain anything of value. The reason is simple enough. They are unplundered because they were not considered worth plundering. Tomb robbing in ancient Egypt was systematic and thorough, and a rich burial stood but a very small chance of remaining undisturbed. Indeed, had he

but realized it, the Egyptian who prepared a very elaborate outfit for his use in the next world was by that very means endangering his own chances of future existence at all. Content with a simple, shallow grave, his body would probably have remained, for several thousand years at any rate, undisturbed; in a massive, imposing tomb, with every conceivable need amply provided for, it was practically marked down for destruction, and himself therefore to the fate he most feared—extinction. That this wholesale plundering was actually contemporary is amply proved. If we had nothing else to go upon we should be justified in assuming it, from the fact that it is in general the plundered rather than the virgin grave that produces the objects which are worth while. The tomb robbers, we should say, must have had definite knowledge as to which graves were worth robbing and which were not. As it happens, however, we have no need to fall back on assumptions, for we have very definite evidence that in some cases they not only knew exactly where to go, but had actually taken steps before the funeral to facilitate their designs. One instance in particular recurs vividly to my mind: it made the more impression on me because it happened in my first year's work in Egypt, and was my first experience of ancient burial graft. In excavating a large and important mastaba tomb we found both passage and